

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE RAREST BOOKS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RAREST BOOKS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED, WHICH BECAME THE LAST PROPERTY OF CHARLES L. COLLIER, F. S. A. In Four Volumes, crown 8vo, pp. 327, 323, 321, 341. David & Charles Scribner & Co.

The lovers of old English literature have reason to congratulate themselves that the reprinting of the most valuable contribution to bibliographical knowledge which has been given to our language for many years, has been undertaken by a publisher who has a genuine appreciation of the remarkable merit of the book, and the good taste and liberality to clothe it in a gild appropriate to its subject and worthy of it in point of elegance, neatness and accuracy. The mechanical execution of the four handsome volumes for which we are indebted to Mr. Francis is almost enough, irrespective of the literary and historical merit of Mr. Collier's work, to tempt anybody to buy them. We have not seen the English edition, but it is said to be far inferior to the American one, and we are glad to perceive that Mr. Collier has made a handsome acknowledgment of Mr. Francis' enterprise.

One of the chief merits of Mr. Collier's book is that it is supplementary to all other bibliographical manuals. Many of the articles describe productions altogether unknown to other investigators, books of which only a single copy is known to be in existence, or separate tracts of the utmost rarity. A very few more common but still scarce publications will be found interspersed, a circumstance arising from the fact that the author has incorporated in his four volumes the whole of the "Bridgewater Catalogue," drawn up by him about 30 years ago for the first Earl of Ellesmere, and privately printed at the expense of that nobleman. But except for the sake of illustration or the correction of some important error, Mr. Collier never criticizes a volume which has passed through the hands of any previous bibliographer. And what is of great importance, he discusses the merits and peculiarities of no book which has not been carefully read by his own eyes.

His work is by no means a bare catalogue, nor is it merely what it professes to be in its title-page—a bibliography. With all needful information respecting the date, authorship, &c., of every publication that he describes, he furnishes a satisfactory, and in many cases a very entertaining account of its subject matter and style, with abundant extracts by way of specimens. He gives us stanzas and whole poems which were excluded by the authors from the second impressions of their works, and have not found their way back into any subsequent editions. It enables us to correct many important and curious errors which have been universally current in modern prints of ancient writers, and he points out some mistakes even as to the authorship of certain productions. While his labors must prove of immense value to the bibliographer, they are certain at the same time to be acceptable to the antiquary and the student of literature.

As a sample of these strange bits of information which may be found scattered through these pages, we copy an extract respecting women's dress from "A Godly and Profitable Treatise, intituled, Absalom, his Fall, or the Ruin of Roystons," &c., a black letter of the 16th Century. Our readers may think it not important to the present time:

"As for their draynes, leynys, which are scutellis, and such like, as the wylde wondys will carrie them away, which so criffidly leynys, plaid to them, shewes them to be the aile of their heads, or at least wise to the aile of their heads, they are not more comely for little chilren, or haire to haire, than to be shewys, and therfore are not gudly suffyng (whiche I thinke, the drell leynys in every seyn) they are not more fit for monstres and gaudys, than for such slender and gaudy creases of God! As for their fanflasses (which bid for reverence we might otherwise thinke) they are not the sleves therof more fit to weare in the mouneth, Venetians, than the shewys therof. All thei (four leynys) must be to prossers their tenuer carresses from the weather."

Six Edward Dyer published at Oxford, in 1558, "Sixe Idyllia; that is, Sixe small or petty Poems or Allegories, chosen of the right famous Sicilian Poet Theocritus, and translated into English vers." Among them is a version of the fable of Venus and Adonis, in which the boar, being reproached by the Paphian goddess for causing the death of Adonis, replies that he only wished to kill and not to wound the beautiful youth, and then continues in the following remarkable strain:

"Therefore these teeth, Venus,

Or parash or cut ent.

Why here is in my mouth

These needless teeth shott!

If this may be my bane,

Cut off my chaps likewise."

Under the name of Nicholas Breton, the pastoral poet of the beginning of the seventeenth century, we have an account of that author's "Passionate Shephard; or, The Shepheards Love," which Mr. Collier pronounces "an entire novelty in our poetical annals; it is not to be traced in any catalogues or work on bibliography." We submit several extracts from this literary curiosity, by which our readers will see that it has higher merits than rarity to recommend:

"Who can live in heart so glad,

As the ewe comrie leid,

When the green grass doth make

Every man to grome and walke,

And make the Armes shies,

For the morning sunnes leid,

When the day is fairely spring,

How the birds do chirpe and sing;

Or before the hounds in cre,

Or when the swans in cre,

Or along the shallow brooks,

Angling with a baited hook,

Or when the swans in cre,

In a blessed sunny day,

And so proceedes,

enumerating a variety of rural sights

and sounds, and ending thus passionately regarding his sheepishness:

"For whose sake I say and weare,

I had a graine graine,

I had a graine graine,